Joseph F. Gennaro, Jr.
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October 18, 2004

Dear Gary,

I'm sorry to have taken so long to answer your letter. I do appreciate the squid stuff you sent. I will search www.peabody.yale.edu to see what they put up.

Several other things you say are certainly of interest as well. Please send me the address of Dr. Karl Shuker. Of course since crypto zoology is not really my field I had not known of him.

Regarding the DNA paper I have some serious problems to consider. The paper was rejected by the Journal as it stands primarily because the group of graduate students who did the DNA work or not able to keep track of the Generic and Specific names of the whale from which the tissue was taken. This means that even though the sample came from Eubalaena glacialis they got a match with the DNA from Balaena mysticetus. Since it was a very close match, they assumed they were correct. I spent a great deal of time trying to teach them that DNA extracted from an apple, no matter how much it looks like DNA extracted from an orange, will make the apple and orange. I remember as a graduate student thinking that the tunnel vision I possessed took in everything "important". I think it takes time to understand more. Unfortunately, when putting together a paper that encompasses several disciplines, is very tough to keep up with everything--especially when some of the newer things are beyond your expertise. Now we are somewhat embarrassed. I have to write to the editor and apologize for the error and cite other points of evidence which we have that distinguish Octopus giganteus from anything else. Incidentally, there is something that you might do to help in this regard. Michel has pointed out to me several differences between what Pierce says in his first paper and in his second paper, e.g., the "blob" that he describes as an Elasmobranch in the first paper turns into a whale in the second. If you have time to scan these two papers and list some inconsistencies for me, I would appreciate it.

The Journal of Scientific Exploration, is another new one on me. Could you send me Dr. Henry Bauer's address as well?

You know, your comments on a South American Nazi secret airbase mentioned by Ivan struck a chord with me. I do remember him saying that, somewhere in the Bahamas, and American industrialist millionaire sympathizer was helping to refuel Nazi submarines, perhaps in Jamaica. Once much later after that my wife and I had an opportunity to visit Jamaica and we searched the beach to find only some concrete bunkers of unexplained origin. Another feature of the "Last Interview---" article that struck me of interest to you was a comment that--"animals that live without eyes are normally found in the earth, or in caves,"--. There is an island in the Gulf of Mexico, Seahorse Key, on which a large group of cottonmouth moccasins exists. The snakes apparently are part of a very successful race of the species which, for some reason, never develop eyes. Since there are very few predators on the island (the overgrowth is very dense and large birds which might ordinarily on the snakes cannot see them), they thrive in the environment on fish and birds eggs during the nesting season. So you see, there are special cases in which these comments are not quite true.

I'll close now but I will keep you in touch regarding the paper and the editor's comments.

Joseph

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February 8, 2004

Gary Mangiacopra
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Dear Gary,
I just received your letter in yesterday's mail so I thought I would get this answer out as soon as possible. Also, there were many stamps on the envelope that were not canceled and so I will return them to you here.

Because of your interest in Ivan Sanderson I took the opportunity to discuss his visit with Doris, my wife, and will hereby relate to you although we can remember of the time. I'm not exactly sure when it was we met Sanderson but I do know that he was introduced to me by the English physician, Kenneth Backhouse, who was visiting our department (hoping for a permanent position, I think). Ken mentioned to me that someone he knew (an Englishman?) was visiting Florida and would stop by Gainesville. The visit was for only one day and we spent that afternoon in the Anatomy Laboratory where Backhouse had a porpoise cadaver that he was dissecting. It seems that the porpoise has a large globe of fat on top of his head and this organ has no known function (at least at that time) and they spent a couple of hours, Sanderson and Backhaus, arguing about what its function could possibly be. I believe that Sanderson and Roy Pinney were staying in a local motel and we arranged to meet at what was then the best local restaurant for supper. At that time Alachua County (as well as Gainesville) was dry and no liquor could be bought or served here but we were able to take a bottle of red wine from our household stock with us when we met them downtown at the Primrose Grill on University Avenue across the street from the Florida Theatre. I remember that the wine bottle had to be in a paper bag "so that no one could see what it was". At the restaurant they did serve us " extra water glasses" for the wine.

As I remember supper, the time passed very pleasantly although the food was certainly not spectacular being mostly typical Southern fried stuff. There was a good deal of discussion about what Sanderson and Pinney came to Florida for—either something to do with manatees or snakes—I forget which. If I mentioned my work with the snakes and the Giant Octopus it must have been at this time. I don't think we discussed it and any great length, although I may be mistaken, because at that time I did not regard it seriously myself. I don't think I had yet traveled to Washington to pick up the specimen I got from the Smithsonian, but I may be mistaken on that too.

I do know that they were planning on driving further south the next day and I seem to remember that they planned to visit one of the springs there. I know I asked Roy about his photographic techniques and how he achieved such remarkable depth of field in his snake pictures. That was when he told me about his background in fashion and baby photography and his hobby in snakes and other reptiles. As a matter of fact he mentioned that he had had someone drill a tiny hole in an aluminum plate to create a minuscule f-stop, about f64-128 or so according to his calculations, and in his plate camera this provided the depth he wanted. After supper we each went our way and that was the last I saw of Sanderson. I don't know why I never connected the request that came from Argosy Magazine with him. Maybe I did, I just don't remember. (Interesting, your comments that the octopus story was probably published twice without my being paid anything for either time.) As I told you I did meet Roy again many years later when I gave a lecture at the Bronx zoo and he was in the audience.

Thank you very much for all your comments about the Octopus. This is exactly the kind of thing I need from you and Michel in order to keep the historical part correct. Of course, I will send the ms to you (and to him) for any constructive criticism before I send it to the Journal. And as you say, it must be impeccable if we want to avoid future criticism and doubt. I think that we can show pretty well that the carcass belonged to a cephalopod, not a whale, but I don't think it will be possible to prove that the cephalopod was an octopus and not an enormous giant squid. This is especially true in view of your records about squids truly huge in size. All we will have to go on are the pictures and descriptions from the (nonscientific) bystanders on the beach. Of course they are pretty specific, especially the measurements, but then again we run into the problem of whether these people could really tell

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January 27, 2004

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Dear Gary,

Once again I have postponed calling you hoping to complete the manuscript about our octopus before I do so that we can discuss it over the phone. I have made a good deal of progress this week and I hope to be finished as soon as possible.

You are right about Pierce being rude. I'm afraid that he seems frightened that we will come up with something that will tip his canoe (as indeed we shall). Not only that, according to the statisticians with whom I have been talking our statistics can prove that his paper in Biological Bulletin was faked. But maybe I should say "contrived".

Thank you for your copy of your paper and the material from the Fortean Times. I found it of great interest. I am sure that after our two papers come out you will be able to put a more popular note in the Times about what we have done to publicize it further. I would like to tell as many people as possible that Octopus giganteus is not a whale, is certainly a cephalopod and probably an octopus.

I can tell you something more about my relationship to Ivan Sanderson. (I didn't know that he was editor of Argosy magazine.) When I was teaching in New York Argosy contacted me for an article on the giant octopus which I wrote but before they paid me they went bankrupt (even though the article was published). The article for Argosy was not really much like the article in Natural History Magazine. Somewhat more fancifully I suggested that these giant cephalopod sightings occurred as a result of submarine volcanic activity, primarily the explosion at Krakatoa. I hypothesized that these creatures live at enormous debts and that the water temperatures have to be

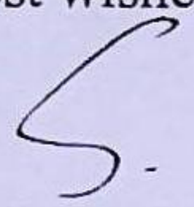
low in order to dissolve sufficient oxygen for them, and when the deep ocean began to warm they began to suffocate and either died and floated to the top or came up to shallow regions for the sake of higher oxygen concentrations. (But there the pressures were insufficient to maintain the gaseous diffusion of oxygen throughout their system in quantities that would maintain their life processes.) And then later they died. Anyway, it was an Argosy type article and I thought it was worth what they would have paid me for it. I confess I felt somewhat cheated to learn that they took the article and then reneged on the payment (but I expect that there were a lot of creditors that they stiffed for bigger bucks than my account.). I never did get to know Sanderson very well but, as you probably have learned, most people who earn their living by writing in this area live by their wits. It seemed to me that he was one of these. (Otherwise there would have been no reason to fake a Ph.D.) He had carefully cultivated his image and he certainly had a great imagination and a wonderful ability to express it. When he visited Gainesville he and Pinney were looking for some kind of a rare alligator and they stopped by to say hello to another Englishman who was working in our department at that time (Ken Backhouse). I remember that they had some talk about the function of that large dome of fat on the head of the porpoise and then we went out to supper. In those days Gainesville, or rather Alachua County, was dry so we had to buy our own bottle of wine elsewhere and eat in a restaurant where they permitted one to keep it under the table in a paper bag and pour it into the water glasses. It was a funny evening. As far as your quoting me in anything you say about Ivan, I would agree completely. I would prefer, if you don't mind, that you not say anything derogatory. I did enjoy him that evening and I think you would have too, had you an opportunity to be with us.

Pinney and Sanderson were great friends. As a matter of fact I think that Sanderson frequently stayed with Pinney in Pinney's house, a rather nice brownstone in Manhattan when he had to be in the city rather than travel to New Jersey where, I think, he lived. Also they said something about Pinney being friendly with Ivan's wife (or ex-wife?). Pinney was a rather well-known fashion photographer at the beginning of his career and because his wife at that time was very successful at getting babies to pose for his camera they began to do fashion photography of the children of the idle rich and they did very well at that. He was always fascinated with snakes, however, and by doctoring his view camera to produce great depth of field he was able to take magnificent color images—better than any I had seen that time.

Unfortunately, later he tried to put them all together in another book but because the color film at that time was really not very good they had all bleached out and were useless. I met him from time to time in New York. He supported the New York Zoological Society and when I spoke there we talked a little but I never had anything to do with him beyond that. One of the places where I had my film processed was friendly with him and that was how I found out about his transparencies bleaching out.

Well I guess that's enough for now, I will try to finish this work up and get it out to you and Michel as soon as possible.

Best wishes,



Joseph Gennaro

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Dear Gary,
I must thank you for the two letters (12/10; 12/15) which I received from you together with reprints and information on Ivan Sanderson. I met Sanderson quite by accident during my first period of employment at the University of Florida (1956-1964) when he came down here with Roy Pinney to do some research on a project he was interested in. At the time I was much more interested in Pinney who, during his career as a professional photographer, took some really wonderful pictures of snakes, which is what I was interested in at the time. But I found Sanderson very amusing and interesting to talk to and soon we hit it off quite well. I think, however, that this was the only time we met. Much later, when I was in New York, I met Roy again when I gave a lecture at the Bronx Zoo.

You never send me anything, letter or article, that doesn't give me some information that is new. I like your letters because they answer in detail questions I have even in my own mind. And as far as the articles go you have the facility to send me the entire article when previously I have only had a small part to review. For example, although I have had a copy of the Verrill's retraction of the Cephalopod hypothesis (American Journal of Science, 7), I had never seen the earlier publication in that Journal (17) in which he actually gives Octopus giganteus its name. (And also describes the good condition of the tissue when he received it.) The same is true about the article which appeared in The American Naturalist. Incidentally, I think someone once told me that that drawing of O. giganteus was drawn by his son, is that true?

Thank you very much for your phone number and the approximate daily schedule. I promise I will try not to abuse the privilege and call too often. I appreciate your advice about the Phone Card. We have already discovered how inexpensive its use can be (in that respect, I will send you quite a bunch of stamps (uncanceled) from the envelopes you sent me. As long as you must bear the burden for sending me the articles I request, the least I can do is save you the postage.

Thank you for the card and your kind holiday wishes,

Joseph

You mention getting to your computer, do you also have an e-mail connection? You know that some services of "hot mail" and "Yahoo" are free.